



News Release

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Secretary Selecky receives Nathan R. Davis Award for career of service
American Medical Association gives honor for 30 years of improving public health

OLYMPIA — Washington State Secretary of Health Mary Selecky will receive the American Medical Association's 2010 Dr. Nathan Davis Award for Outstanding Government Service.

Secretary Selecky's award is in the category for Career Public Servant at the State Level. It will be presented tonight in Washington, D.C. The AMA established the awards in 1989 to honor exceptional achievement in advancing public health.

AMA Executive Vice President Dr. Michael D. Maves wrote to Secretary Selecky, "The caliber of our nominees was truly inspiring and your selection from such an impressive group certainly speaks volumes in recognizing the diligence and dedication of your public service."

Washington State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes, who received the same award in 2002, nominated Selecky.

"This award represents what Mary's career has been all about," said Dr. Hayes. "She's devoted herself to public health in Washington with a level of commitment that's impossible to match. I can't think of anyone more deserving of this tribute."

Selecky's public health career began more than 30 years ago when she became administrator of the Northeast Tri-County Health District, based in Colville. During the two decades she spent there she helped create the Washington State Department of Health, which she now leads. She also helped develop Washington's nationally recognized Public Health Improvement Partnership, which promotes a unified approach to public health.

"It's a wonderful honor and I'm thrilled to accept it," Secretary Selecky said. "To me, public service has never been an obligation. It's a way of life I learned from my parents. The award is a credit to all the dedicated people I've been privileged to work with in state and local public health. More important, it reflects on work that's being done to serve the people of our state."

Selecky is the second person with ties to the Northeast Tri-County Health District to receive a Dr. Nathan Davis Award. Dr. Edmund W. Gray, the district's health officer, was honored in 2006 as Career Public Servant at the Local Level.

"I learned a lot of my approach to public health from Ed Gray and Maxine Hayes. I'm delighted to be in their company," said Selecky, who has lived in Washington for 36 years.

In 1998, then-Governor Gary Locke appointed Secretary Selecky to direct the state Department of Health. She has continued as secretary under Governor Chris Gregoire, and is among the longest serving state health leaders in the nation.

Among Selecky's top priorities have been tobacco prevention and control, patient safety, and emergency preparedness.

Selecky is a University of Pennsylvania graduate.

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